



Climate change and mental health: A causal pathways framework

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Abstract:

OBJECTIVES: Climate change will bring more frequent, long lasting and severe adverse weather events and these changes will affect mental health. We propose an explanatory framework to enhance consideration of how these effects may operate and to encourage debate about this important aspect of the health impacts of climate change. **METHODS:** Literature review. **RESULTS:** Climate change may affect mental health directly by exposing people to trauma. It may also affect mental health indirectly, by affecting (1) physical health (for example, extreme heat exposure causes heat exhaustion in vulnerable people, and associated mental health consequences) and (2) community wellbeing. Within community, wellbeing is a sub-process in which climate change erodes physical environments which, in turn, damage social environments. Vulnerable people and places, especially in low-income countries, will be particularly badly affected. **CONCLUSIONS:** Different aspects of climate change may affect mental health through direct and indirect pathways, leading to serious mental health problems, possibly including increased suicide mortality. We propose that it is helpful to integrate these pathways in an explanatory framework, which may assist in developing public health policy, practice and research.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Temperature

Extreme Weather Event: Drought

Temperature: Extreme Heat

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Rural

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Family Planning/Population Reduction):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to promote family planning or reduce population growth as a climate change adaptation or mitigation measure

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Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Mood Disorder, Schizophrenia/Delusional Disorder, Stress Disorder

Medical Community Engagement:

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article, Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

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